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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT Saturday, April 15, 1939

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

SUBJECT: "VITAMIN C CONVERSATION." Information from Sybil L. Smith, Office of Experiment Stations, U.S.D.A.

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Spring seems an appropriate time for conversation about vitamin C, because at this time of year the effects of winter diets too low in this vitamin may show up. They show up in certain ills that are actually symptoms of scurvy--or if not actual scurvy, at least a rundown feeling. It's the seasonal "tired feeling" that often goes along with aching bones and joints. These symptoms once were common in northern climates where people had only dried and stored foods during the winter. And they regularly disappeared like magic after spring green came to the table.

Today such troubles aren't so common because people can get foods rich in vitamin C all winter. But among people who don't choose their winter menus wisely, these troubles still show up in spring, even if they are nothing more than weariness, or lack of pep, or an irritable disposition. So nowadays everyone who wants to keep in best health is interested in knowing what vitamin C is and how to get the right amount.

Vitamin C is a kind of acid which nature puts in most fresh foods. Recently chemists have learned how to obtain the pure vitamin from these foods, and even to manufacture it in the laboratory. They have also learned that vitamin C is soluble in water and rather easily destroyed by heat and air. That explains how foods can lose vitamin C so easily. If you buy this vitamin in the drug store, you will get a bottle of small white tablets labeled "cevitamic acid"--C-E-V-I-T-A-M-I-C (for C vitamin). So if you want to, you can take your daily vitamin C in the form of a little white tablet. But who wouldn't prefer to get it in a glass of refreshing

orange or tomato juice, or in some fresh raw fruit or vegetable?

The discovery of the chemical nature of vitamin C started much of the research in progress today, for it provided a means of testing foods for the vitamin and also testing human beings to find out how much they needed. At some 20 State experiment stations research on this vitamin is now in progress. The new research shows that most people need more vitamin C than they get in the average American diet. Although you can "get by" on fairly small amounts of vitamin C, you need considerably more to have abundant health and resist infections.

At the New York (Cornell) Experiment Station, nutrition workers report that all the young women tested so far probably need more vitamin C every day than is found in a small glass of orange juice; some need as much as a large glass or measuring cupful every day. And judging by tests made on college girls in 2 New England State colleges and 5 Northwest State colleges, few students are getting as much vitamins as a large glass of orange juice every day would furnish. So far the records indicate that the girls of the Northwest are somewhat ahead in their vitamin C records, perhaps because in Washington and Oregon the longer growing season provides an abundance of fresh foods all winter, or perhaps because of traditional food habits. However, in both the Northeast and the Northwest girls who had been at college for awhile scored better than when they entered. The college meals probably contained more vitamin C than the meals the girls had been getting at home. And then, the girls learned about vitamin C in their nutrition classes, so became interested in choosing foods that provided it.

Though citrus fruits and tomatoes are some of the best foods for vitamin C, there are plenty of other good sources. Most fresh raw vegetables as well as fruits contain this vitamin and some are very rich in it--young green cabbage and green peppers, for example.

Though vegetables may have a good supply of vitamin C when they are fresh from the garden, they lose much of it during cooking. Heating destroys some of the

vitamin but even more of it dissolves in the cooking water. At the New York State Experiment Station they found that sometimes as much as two-thirds of the vitamin C in vegetables went into the cooking water. You can see from this why nutrition workers believe in using up the water vegetables have cooked in.

Even potatoes can help considerably toward giving you the vitamin C you need, especially if you eat several a day. Years ago they used to say that the failure of the potato crop in Ireland spelled scurvy. Nowadays with so many foods on the market that are richer in vitamin C, many people forget how valuable the humble potato can be in supplying this vitamin. A good-sized potato is only about a third as rich in vitamin C as one orange, but if you eat potatoes generously and cook them properly, you'll get a good share of your vitamin C quota. At the Montana Station they found recently that potatoes hold their vitamin C best when baked, next best when steamed, then boiled, then mashed, and last of all fried.

So to get your vitamin C you must choose the right foods, and, if you cook them, cook them properly.

Now just to review these vitamin C facts, suppose I list a few of the common foods which will supply enough vitamin C to an adult for best health. One full measuring cup or a large glass of orange juice every day will give an abundance. So will 2 glasses of tomato juice. Or 3 large baked potatoes. Or 6 of the richer variety of apples. Or a bowl of fresh raw green cabbage and green pepper salad. Or a large dish of strawberries. Those are just a few examples of the foods that help you avoid "spring fatigue."